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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Benjamin O. Chukwu

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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The Office of the Provost

Walden University
2019

Abstract

Strategies to Motivate and Retain Sales Associates in Small Businesses

by

Benjamin O. Chukwu

BS. The College of Westchester, 2014

MS. Concordia College, 2016

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2019

Abstract

Owners of small businesses who fail to implement adequate employee motivation and retention strategies may experience lost profit and high employee turnover. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the managerial strategies that small business owners use to motivate and retain sales associates to increase profits. The population for the study included owners of 4 businesses in Texas who successfully implemented employees' motivation and retention strategies. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with business owners and from artifacts such as company websites and social media pages. Transformational leadership theory guided the study. Data were analyzed using Yin's 5 steps of data analysis including compiling data, disassembling data, reassembling data, interpreting data, and drawing conclusions. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: provide financial incentives, increase job satisfaction, and enhance job training. The findings of this study might contribute to positive social change by providing owners of small businesses with strategies to retain employee, which may build customer loyalty and increase business performance and longevity. Business leaders may benefit from these findings by strengthening relationship with employees and improving the overall performance of the organization. The results of this study could also contribute to positive social change by helping other small business owners implementing motivation and retention strategies, which might enhance business sustainability. Business sustainability supports both local and state economies and fosters an optimum distribution of resources in the community.

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Dedication

I dedicated this doctoral study to my late beloved Mother, who departed and went and be with the Lord in 2016. My mom's motivation and inspiration from my early childhood has impacted me positively to be a humble and hard-working individual. She thought me in the early stage of my life to always be optimistic and positive in everything I do with the fear of the Lord. Through her advice and mentorship, I developed a character and humbleness that helped me to pursue and complete this terminal degree as an American scholar. My next dedication goes to my lovely wife Chichi Chukwu, who stood with me day and night with support, care, and love that every supportive and caring wife could give to her husband to pursue his dream. Sweetheart, I love you and I am proud of your dedication, loyalty, and trust you bested on me. Thank you for being a super and sweet mother to our lovely children Prince, Jennifer Chukwu, and our newborn baby Joseph Chukwuemeka Chukwu, who was born on April 2019. I know during this historic doctoral journey, I did not give you guys enough family time, and I assure you that I will make it up for you. Also, I believe that I have created a solid foundation for my children demonstrating perseverance, determination, motivation, inspiration, and fulfilling my dream when facing life's challenges. Determination is my motto, and with God, all things are possible. Thank you, my lovely family. I love you all!

Acknowledgment

To my chair, Dr. Carol-Anne Faint, I am thankful and appreciative of you. You are a fantastic person with a positive spirit to guide others. Since joining Walden University, you have demonstrated servant and transformational leadership diligently as you served and influence others to accomplish their goals. Again, thank you very much for being there for me, and your other students. I want to also thank my second reader Dr. Olivia Herriford for your encouragement and support throughout my doctoral study. Many thanks my URR, Dr. Jaime Klein and methodologist, Dr. Al Endres, and Dr. Susan Davis, the Program Director, for guidance throughout the doctoral journey. Special thanks to Ms. JoAnn Sondey, the director of the career service at the College of Westchester, White Plain, New York. You provided me with excellent advice and direction to pursue my masters' degree during and after I left the College of Westchester. Also, many thanks to Dr. William Salva, the Dean, school of business professor of business at Concordia College. And, Dr. Philip Rothman, the Chair of the undergraduate business program and associate professor of business. Both of you were my professors during my master's degree at Concordia College. Your positive advice contributed to this great accomplishment. This acknowledgement goes to my elder brother, K. C. Ezech, I appreciate your brotherly love, support, and I will forever remain grateful for your encouragement. To my cousin, Titus Ekeoma, the general manager [GM] of Mutual of Omaha, Atlanta, Georgia, thank you for your unwavering support, and you are indeed a true brother. My brother Emeka C. Ezech, and Rev. Dr Godfrey Uche, Chioma Orji a special thanks to you all for your continuous prayer and encouragement.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Business owners and managers in the small business sector may need to understand the significance of leadership strategies to improve business productivity and profitability. The small business sector in the United States contributes to 99.9% of the economy (Small Business Association [SBA], 2016). With these statistical findings from the SBA, the small business sectors play a significant role in enhancing the national economy of the United States. Conversely, lack of motivation can have a negative impact on the business. In this study, I explored the strategies small business owners use to motivate and retain sales associates to increase business profits. Motivating and retaining employees is critical to keeping and improving business productivity, which has a direct benefit to business profitability (Bucata & Rizescu, 2017). Motivation can also help small businesses to remain operable, thereby strengthening the economy. The purpose of this research was to explore the strategies small business owners used to motivate and retain their sales associates.

Background of the Problem

Motivating employees may enable small business owners to remain competitive. Small business has played a significant role in job creation and economic growth in the United States (U. S. Census Bureau, 2016). Successful small businesses are vital to the U. S. economy, and small businesses employ 64% of the private workforce and provide more than 40% of private sales (SBA, 2016). Companies can gain a competitive advantage when employees are motivated, which positively influences business profitability (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). The results of this study might make an essential

contribution to the existing body of literature by providing supportive data on employee motivation.

Problem Statement

Business owners experience insufficient employee productivity and lost profits when they are unable to motivate and retain employees (McManus & Mosca, 2015). An organization may experience a negative impact on productivity and profitability when employees lack motivation and job satisfaction (Baskar & Rajkumar, 2015). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) indicated that the annual employee small business voluntary turnover rate increased from 26.8% in 2010, to 33.5% in 2014, with a national average of 22%. The general business problem is that if business owners do not motivate employees to reduce turnover, they may experience lost profits. The specific business problem is that some small business owners lack strategies to motivate and retain sales associates to increase profits.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that small business owners used to motivate and retain sales associates to increase profits. The population for this multiple case study consisted of four small business owners located in Texas who have deployed successful strategies to motivate employees. The implications for positive social change may be the improved employee retention, thus promoting greater business sustainability, spending power, and economic stability in the communities.

Nature of the Study

Researchers select between three methods: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative researchers investigate a problem through interviews, artifacts, and reports (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). I used a qualitative method because I intended to ask open-ended questions to collect data. Researchers using quantitative research examine the relationship between variables and explain phenomena using hypotheses testing rather than participants' narrative experiences (McCusker & Gienayelin, 2015). I did not use the quantitative method for this study because I did not intend to examine variable relationships or differences, and my data included words, themes, and observations. Mixed-methods research was not suitable for my study because, according to Wong and Cooper (2016), mixed methods comprise both quantitative and qualitative components that examine and explore relationships or differences among variables. The inclusion of quantitative data in the mixed methods rendered the mixed methods approach inappropriate for the study.

The three designs I considered for my qualitative research were (a) case study, (b) phenomenology and (c) ethnography. Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that a case study, phenomenology, or ethnography are appropriate designs for a qualitative research study. Phenomenological researchers seek to understand a business problem by exploring lived experiences only (Giorgi, 2015). The phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study because I explored more than lived experiences alone to explain the business problem. Ethnographic researchers investigate unique populations, cultures, and social groups seeking to explain the phenomenon considering unique factors related only

to the group (Pluye, Hong, Bush, & Vedal, 2016). An ethnographic design was not appropriate because the selected population was not culturally unique. A researcher conducts a case study as an empirical inquiry to investigate a case or cases (Yaghmaei & Brem, 2015). Yin (2016) stated that a case study gives researchers access to a situation previously inaccessible to empirical study. Therefore, the case study design was appropriate for this research study. I used a case study design to explore the phenomenon through interviews, documentation, and physical artifacts to gain valuable information about decision-making processes by small business owners to motivate and retain their sales employees to increase profits.

Research Question

What strategies do small business owners use to motivate and retain sales associates to increase profits?

Interview Questions

1. How does employee retention contribute to business performance?
2. What individualized considerations do you provide to employees to motivate them?
3. How do individualized considerations lead to retention and improved business performance?
4. How do you evaluate workplace satisfaction?
5. What exit interview initiatives, if any, do you engage in?
6. What information do you gain from exit interviews?
7. How do you address any personnel issues to improve retention?
8. How does retention increase profits?

9. What additional information can you provide to assist me in understanding how you improve business performance through retaining employees?

Conceptual Framework

Transformational leadership was the conceptual framework for this study. First introduced by Downtown in 1973 and developed into a theory by Burns in 1978 (Manning & Kurtis, 2012), transformational leadership is an approach business leader use to raise inspiration and business performance and profitability through guidance and interaction between leaders and subordinates to enhance employee productivity. The tenets of transformational leadership include: (a) idealized attributes, (b) idealized behaviors, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) inspirational motivation, and (e) individualized considerations (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership was appropriate for this study because intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation may heighten employee retention and lead to improved business profitability.

Operational Definitions

The following are the definitions of terms I used in this study:

Employee motivation: Employee motivation is a unique strategy leader use to encourage and engage their employees and may include tangible and intangible measures to navigate employees towards achieving specific goals (Kushwaha & Lodhwal, 2016).

Employee retention: Employee retention, in this study, is the outcome of motivational strategies to connect and secure employee commitment (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2016).

Employee turnover: Employee turnover is a negative indicator of organizational effectiveness based on the rate of employees leaving a business (Nica, 2016).

Job performance: Job performance is the outcome of motivational efforts to promote business-related action to promote company development and strength (Sharma, Kong, & Kingshott, 2016).

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction is an indicator used to predict workplace outcomes. Employee job satisfaction may reflect in improved company performance and profitability (Sokolová, Mohelská, & Zubr, 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

The assumptions of a research study are the conviction that the researcher assumes are factual and authentic (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). First, I assumed that every participant that I interviewed provided an honest response to each question. Second, I assumed that at the time of the interview, participants provided detailed information to enhance the study.

Limitations

Limitations are possible weaknesses beyond the control of the researcher in a research procedure (Matza et al. 2015). The use of a case study involves interviewing a small population knowledgeable about a phenomenon; the findings generated from this confined group may not produce generalizations about an entire industry or geographic area.

Delimitations

Delimitations consist of the boundaries of a study within the control of the researcher (Thomas, Silverman, & Nelson, 2015). The geographical parameter of the study was the State of Texas. Participants were four business leaders who have used motivational strategies to successfully retain employees.

Significance of the Study**Contribution to Business Practice**

This study may contribute to business practice by identifying transformational leadership strategies that business leaders have used to aid employee retention and build business profitability. Improved employee retention may strengthen consistency in business practices, enhancing business-customer relations and thus, customer loyalty. Focusing on motivational factors to enhance retention and profitability may increase business stability and longevity, which may support business growth.

Implications for Social Change

This study may contribute to social change by creating a work environment where individuals want to work, thus stabilizing family incomes and economic independence. Economic independence thus stimulates the exchange of goods and services, promoting business development, fueling local economies, and enhancing employment options for local citizens.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small business owners use to motivate and retain their sales associates in Texas. The primary

objective in this section is to explore literature concerning transformational leadership theory that may lead to strategies to increase the performance of sales employees. The central research question was: What strategies do small business owners use to motivate and retain their sales associates to increase profits? In this literature review, I explored various strategies related to motivation and retention of employees, which might help business owners to increase their business profits.

Key topics covered in this literature review include: (a) employee motivation, (b) employee retention, (c) employee turnover, (d) job performance, (e) job productivity, (f) job satisfaction, (g) profitability, (h) insufficient business performance, and (I) transformational leadership. The purpose of the literature review is to provide the reader with fundamental information about employee motivation and retention.

I collected materials for the literature review from the following databases: ABI/INFORM-ProQuest, SAGE Journals, EbscoHost, Google Scholar, and various business and management databases such as Business Source Complete, Emerald Management, Academic Search Complete, Peer Review Journals and Seminal Articles, Books, and U.S. Government Publications. In this study, I used 142 articles; of these, 91% were peer reviewed, and 91% were published within the past 5 years. Included were 9 books and 4 government documents.

Relevant Leadership Theories

Leaders play a pivotal role in leading their followers to fulfill organizational goals and objectives. Leaders need to effectively communicate with their employees as they manage human capital and finances and use sound marketing strategies for optimal

profitability (Fiaz, Su, Ikram, & Saqib, 2017). Leadership is a process by which an individual motivates or influences others to achieve an organizational vision. Employee motivation is a way to attain essential organization goals. Thus, employee motivation is the extent to which employees connect emotionally or psychologically to the organization (Fiaz et al., 2017). Employee motivation, profitability, and productivity should increase if the leader supports employees with effective and efficient leadership style. For organizational effectiveness, a business must have excellent leadership, complemented by higher levels of employee motivation.

A leadership style that fosters positive manager-employee relations can leverage employee motivation. Although managers vary in their values, attitudes and behaviors, and the way they lead their followers, Zareen, Mazzaq, and Majitaba (2015) stated that organizational leaders vary the leadership approach to meet the needs of employees. Zareen et al. focused on the impact of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theories on the motivation of the small business sector employee. Mohiuddin (2017) discussed the autocratic leadership style, which characterized detachment among leaders and subordinates, and a different approach from transformational leadership. Transformational leadership practitioners mainly focus on the transformation of values and beliefs of followers through inspiration (Zareen et al., 2015). Transformational leadership is unique from the transactional leadership style (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders try to develop followers' full potential by influencing and engaging them. In response to the transformational leadership approach, (Northouse, 2016) indicated that employees felt more transformed and developed a greater sense of

belonging and organizational commitment. Zareen et al. also highlighted the pros and cons of a transactional leadership style in an organization. Transactional leaders communicate with the followers what they should do and monitor them closely. The followers perform tasks and obtain contingent rewards for satisfactory performance, or may receive a reprimand for unsatisfactory performance. The third leadership style discussed is Laissez-faire leadership style. Laissez-faire leaders delegate all the decision-making power to followers (Zareen et al. 2015). Thus, laissez-faire leaders offer little support to their subordinates and care little about productivity. Laissez-faire leaders give complete freedom to their followers to make decisions by providing them all the necessary tools and resources. Transformational leadership theory comprised the conceptual framework of the study. Transformational leaders enhance the performance of followers (Northouse, 2016).

Transformational leadership. I selected transformational leadership theory because transformational leadership offers a strong set of leadership values and idealized influence, as well as effective inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Transformational leadership theory, introduced by Downtown in 1973, and developed by Burns in 1978 (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders build a relationship to influence and inspire their subordinates to support organizational goals (Northouse, 2016; Zhang et al., 2015). Some researchers have referred to the transformational leader as an innovative leader who makes a difference in all sectors of the economy, public, private, and education (Northouse, 2012; Zhang et al., 2015). Thus, the transformational leader provides insights in guiding company

stakeholders successfully through a process of change, and change has generated many opportunities in business (Malik, Saleem, & Naeem, 2016). For instance, the co-founder of Apple Computer, the late Steve Jobs, was an excellent example of a transformational leader who transformed Apple Computer and introduced a new iPhone that millions of people are using world-wide. Steve Jobs, remembered as innovative, dynamic, charismatic, motivational, and inspirational, was also a transformational leader.

Organizations are searching for leaders who are enlightened, motivational, and can bring change to an organization. The success of the organization lies in the leader's ability to effectively manage stress and address the various needs of followers (Malik et al., 2016).

Malik et al. argued that every organization needs a leader who strives for the organizational mission, the vision, goals, and objectives in an effective manner as well as empower, motivate, and inspire followers. Thus, effective leaders build long-lasting relationships with all stakeholders. Transformational leaders treat their subordinates well and fulfill their employee needs (Bamdale, Girei, & Barwa, 2017). Further, transformational leadership helps organizations achieve the objectives more efficiently by linking job performance to valued rewards, and by ensuring that employees have the resources needed to get the job done. Additionally, transformational leaders motivate subordinates and appeal to their ideas and moral values by creating and representing an inspiring vision of the future. Abdullah and Varatharajoo (2017) indicated that transformational leaders motivate, inspire, and encourage their subordinates to perform beyond what the employees thought possible to attain organizational goals. Alatawi (2017) listed Burns' four transformational leadership components as (a) intellectual

stimulation, (b) individualized consideration, (c) inspirational motivation, and (d) idealized influence that small business owners, managers, and organization leaders can use to motivate their subordinates.

Intellectual stimulation. Leaders use their leadership traits to intellectually stimulate their followers to be creative, innovative, and find extraordinary solution to problems. Northouse (2016) argued that this type of leadership supports followers as they try new approaches and develop innovative ways to respond to organizational matters. The essential tool of intellectual stimulation is the problem-solving ability of followers (Abdullah & Varatharajoo, 2017). Abdullah and Varatharajoo indicated that small and medium-sized company leaders who acquire transformational leadership skills become wiser problem solvers. Also, the transformational leader who gives employees a voice to discuss their concerns provides intellectual stimulation, leading to enhance job satisfaction (Asencio & Hujkic 2016). Employees who believe in the leader's ability to lead will be receptive to intellectual stimulation and will have an elevated level of motivation (Abdullah & Varatharajoo, 2017). Abdullah and Varatharajoo also emphasized that transformational leaders who provide individualize consideration tailor the leadership approach to enhance profitability.

Individualized consideration. Many theorists have broadened the concept of transformational leadership. Abdullah and Varatharajoo (2017) expanded Burns' transformational leadership theory to include individual consideration. Leaders who provide individualized support in managing an organization encourage their subordinates to master and develop professionally to increase their self-esteem to accomplish tasks.

Northouse (2016) also noted that leaders act as coaches and advisers while trying to assist subordinates to advance their careers.

Inspirational motivation. Inspirational motivation energizes employees as business leaders encourage employees to envision the future with optimism. Motivational business leaders stress ambitious goals (Abdullah & Varatharajoo, 2017), foster high expectations, and inspire employees with enthusiasm (Northouse, 2016). Ultimately, a motivated and optimistic employee may help to achieve the shared vision in the organization.

Idealized influence. The transformational leader serves as a role model to subordinates; in turn, the subordinates trust and respect the leaders and internalize their ideas. Transformational leaders are concerned with improving the performance of their subordinates and developing followers to their fullest potential (Northouse, 2016). Abdullah and Varatharajoo (2017) stated that transformational leaders who practice idealized influence acquire a high sense of self-confidence. Northouse argued that transformational leaders frequently have an optimistic set of internally motivating employees or followers who work rapidly to accomplish organizational goals. Syaifuddin (2016) added that transformational leadership could influence workplace motivation and employee performance to increase business profits. Transformational leaders intend to suppress their follower's high-stress levels or low self-esteem to increase employee performance (Syaifuddin, 2016). The goal is to support employees and reduce their stressors to increase workplace performance and profitability.

Alternative Theories

Transactional leadership theory. I considered using transactional leadership theory at the framework for this study. Northouse (2016) noted that transactional leaders use management-by-exception and contingent reward to gain compliance from followers. For instance, management-by-exception implies that a supervisor may seek opportunities to use corrective punishment when observing incorrect work habits, without praising superior performance. The transactional leader gives an employee a deficient performance evaluation without appropriate feedback or guidance, adding to the passive-aggressive nature of the relationship, causing confusion and frustration, a disconnect from the leader and organization, and resulting in voluntary turnover. A consequence of this pattern is the infectious nature of the event, leading to a growing sediment of frustration amongst the employees, which may culminate in job dissatisfaction and further employees leaving the company. Similarly, the other component of Northouse transactional leadership factor is the contingent reward. It is an exchange procedure between leaders and followers in which the leader gives rewards to followers for completing a specified assignment. An example would be a sales manager who gives promotion to an employee for completing a set project. According to Zogjani and Raci (2015), transactional leaders give praise by recognition, pay increases, promotions, and job training and development for an employee who performs exceedingly well, and punishes those who perform below the expected standards.

Laissez-faire leadership theory. Laissez-faire leadership theory was also considered as a possible conceptual framework for the proposed study. Pahi and Hamid

(2016) indicated that Laissez-faire leadership style is a destructive style that offers minimal to no feedback, delaying decisions, and offering less attention to assist or motivate the followers to meet company goals. Northouse (2016) also found that laissez-faire leadership style is the French phrase that implies a “hand-off, let things-ride” approach. The laissez-faire leader abdicates responsibility. There is no exchange between the leader and followers or attempt to help employees develop. An example of a laissez-faire leader is the owner of a small distribution company who does not hold regular meetings with employees to discuss the progress and issues of the company. Laissez-faire leadership style differs from the transformational and transactional leader in that laissez-faire leaders do not promote the advancement of the company in any regard (Asan, 2015). Laissez-faire leaders lack the ability to shift attitudes in employees and maintain the status-quo, even if this works to the detriment of the company.

Pahi and Hamid emphasized that traditionally, leadership researchers focus solely on the transformational and transactional leadership style, and positive outcomes and the relationship with job satisfaction, subordinates, and organizational effectiveness and performance. Also, laissez-faire leaders tend to avoid responsibility and are not capable to make and direct decisions. Laissez-faire leadership style is not as popular as the transformational and transactional, and other leadership styles as laissez-faire leaders cannot motivate or influence subordinates, and the leader lacks positive leadership attributes (Malik et al., 2016). The laissez-faire leader cannot boost employees’ motivation, and the use of this leadership style usually leads to adverse outcomes on organizational productivity and profitability. Researchers suggested that leadership styles,

such as the transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, and numerous other leadership styles can influence employee positively or negatively depending on the leadership style preferable to the leaders (Malik et al., 2016). Thus, the employee performance is the strength of an organization leading to an increase in organizational profitability and sustainability, based on the effectiveness, competency, and ability of the leader to motivate, influence, and inspire employees.

Organizational progress and success depend on how the leaders motivate their employee in achieving organizational goals and objectives. Equally, based on the summaries mentioned above of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership theories, small business owners and managers who adopted transformational leadership style are more likely to perform well, because of the many positive attributes and components of transformational leadership. The end goal of any successful small business is to harness the performance potential of employees to gain competitive edge in the marketplace. The thoughtful development of employees is fundamental to this overarching goal.

Autocratic leadership. Autocratic leaders typically make decisions based on their ideas and rarely consult their subordinates during the decision-making process. El Khouly AbdelDayem, and Saleh (2017) asserted that autocratic leadership style affects organization performance because some of the autocratic leaders use executive privileges forcefully on employees to perform a task. Harrell (2016) argued that due to authoritarian styles of leadership, and autocratic leader decisions and power centralize at the executive board room meeting with little or no subordinates' participation. There is minimal

employee participation in decision making (Donkor & Dongmei, 2018). Whereas, transformational leaders are more able to motivate and influence their subordinates to perform over and achieve what the leader expects, without using coercive directives. Thus, transformational leaders' objective is raising stronger confidence and support to the subordinates to improve an organization's vision and goals (Donkor & Dongmei, 2018). El Khouly et al. highlighted that autocratic leaders lack motivational strategies in comparison to transformational leaders because of the authoritarian leadership attributes. A nondominant leader provides a higher quality of performance and efficient delivery of work performance by employing motivational strategies to the followers, and followers work harmoniously with less intimidation without coercive forces. Conversely, the transformational leader's goal is to motivate followers and inspire them to a higher standard in achieving the company's mission (Bertsch et al, 2017; Gandolfi & Stones, 2017). Furthermore, Bertsch et al. suggested that the autocratic leader makes decisions confidently with little concern about followers' opinions. Since the conceptual framework for this study is a transformation leadership style, and transformational leader uses their ability to influence their subordinates for better organizational success. Many organizational leaders are practicing transformational leadership style that are yielding effective outcomes because of the influence and motivational techniques the leaders employ on their followers, in comparison to the transactional, Laisser-faire, and autocratic leadership styles (Lundell & Marcham, 2018).

Employee Motivation

Establishing a mutually advantageous relationship between the leader and employee is crucial to identifying strategies to motivate employees. Organizations need to introduce new employee's motivational strategies in the workplace to enhance organizational profitability (Kushwaha & Lodhwal, 2016). Motivation as a process that rejuvenates employee behavior toward achieving organizational goals. The organization leader uses motivational techniques within a productive work environment to enhance and improve employee productivity.

Organizational leaders face numerous challenges due to a lack of adequate leadership skills related to bolstering employee. The lack of leadership skills leads to decreased productivity. Organizational leaders play a significant role in influencing their employee positively to achieve the organization's objectives. Job design is a factor that can increase workflows (Porter, Riesenny & Fields, 2016). Also, when employees find meaning in the jobs, they are more likely to devote additional effort in an organization. Porter et al. indicated that a well-designed job leads to innovation and internal employee motivation. The ability to motivate employees should be one of the most critical factors organizational managers should employ or integrate to foster organizational growth and progress (Kubica & Szarucki, 2016).

The notion of inspiration is a technique to impact the behavior of employees in the work process by fostering an autonomous workplace that reinforces idealism, thus, enhancing the environment to promote free-thinking and innovation. Gunasekara (2018) suggested that employee motivation is one of the most critical factors for organization

success. Promoting a spirit of innovation, through motivational techniques, means an organization inspires their employees with some rewards, bonus, and other incentives to enhance organizational goals. Kuznetsova et al. (2017) noted that the key element in an organization is the develop of an efficient motivation strategy. A motivated employee is an organization's most significant asset capable of creating new value to improve organization's objectives and for improving the labor efficiency.

The development of relationships within an organization fuels motivaton. A high-quality relationship between organizational leadership and employees play a significant role in employee motivation (Malik, Wan, Ahmad, Naseem, & Rehman, 2015). Malik, M. et al. argued that leaders have considerable influence on the motivation of the subordinates. Complex working environments are a source of employee stress; and stress is controllable through motivation strategies. Effective leaders should motivate their employees to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Cakir & Kozak, 2017). Thus, motivation is one of the critical determinants of employee performance. Cakir and Kozak suggested that highly motivated employees exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment. In contrast, dissatisfied employees have a high tendency to engage in counterproductive behaviors, such as employee disengagement and employee turnover. Delaney and Royal (2017) emphasized that employee motivation as a core component of engagement, may lead to employee retention. Also, motivation helps employees to be proactive in moving organizational strategies forward for better profitability. Employees who are intrinsically motivated are more innovative, thus, solve problems more efficiently and effectively.

Job satisfaction enhances business performance and profitability. Motivation, either intrinsically or extrinsically, contributes to employee job satisfaction, which enhances productivity and profitability (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Organizations use the motivation factor as a change management strategy to enhance the work environment (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Motivating employees is a great approach for organizational development and improvement (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Similarly, organizational leaders who educate employees on new technologies and leadership skills, will bring necessary improvements to the organization. Kang, Gun, and Lee (2016) added that some organizational leaders used various compensation strategies to boost employee morale, with the aim of providing a reward in response to employee performance. Change management creates varied outcomes; while increased levels of individual motivation positively enhances individual and organizational performance (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Also, rewarding employees prevented talented employees from voluntarily leaving the organization, to promote stability, continuity, and longevity within the organization.

Leaders play a critical role in leading their subordinates to fulfill organizational objectives. In fact, leadership is a process that motivates or influences others to achieve positive changes in an organization; which subsequently, helps increase productivity and profitability of the organization (Fiaz et al. (2017). Organizational leaders must adopt an effective leadership style to help stimulate employee motivation.

Motivation as a strategy is an effective way to enhance change management initiatives in an organization. Motivational techniques and human resources management are essential assets to enhance organizational profitability. Reward programs, such as job security, job satisfaction, and manager's ability and attitude towards employees, play a significant role in employee motivation (Klopota, Mjeda, & Kurecic, 2018). Zareen, Razzaq, and Mujtaba (2015) added that employee motivation is essential for the accomplishment of organizational goals. Organizational leaders should improve employee motivation for the good of an organization. Furthermore, the primary source of competitive advantage for any organization is effective leadership (Zareen et al., 2015). Thus, effective leadership plays a vital role in the growth and better profitability of any organization.

Employee Retention

Employee retention issues are a primary concern for business owners in the U.S. Organizations are affected by increased employee turnover (Dhanpat, Madou, Lugisani, MaboJane, & Phiri, 2018). As a result, business owners rigorously search for ways to improve employee motivation, and job satisfaction, as a means of improving employee retention. Organizational leaders struggle with understanding what promotes employee retention, as various factors influence employees to remain with one company. Thus, employee retention, motivation, and job satisfaction should be a priority; and creating effective retention strategies to decrease turnover is of paramount importance. Dhanpat et al. suggested retention relies upon compensation, career advancement, job satisfaction, training and development, among other strategies. Employee retention creates challenges

for many organizations (Anitha & Begum, 2016). Employees are the most valuable assets of every organization, and organizational leaders cannot afford to lose key talented employees. Therefore, employee turnover creates undue stress on business leaders and employees alike if talented employees voluntarily leave. Many organizational leaders work to retain and motivate their employees by implementing effective retention strategies, including various loyalty-building incentives (Anitha & Begum, 2016). Other factors organizations should employ include demonstrated commitment to employees, and a healthy organizational culture. Motlou, Singh, and Karodia (2016) underscored the impact of job satisfaction and employee retention and highlighted that job satisfaction is a crucial factor for employee retention. Employee retention is the primary focus on many organizations.

Organizational leaders must create a healthy environment, and more opportunities for their employees. Policies can facilitate employee's job satisfaction by providing standards and pathways for resolving workplace conflicts (Motlou et al., 2016). In conclusion, when employees lack satisfaction with their jobs, the situation might force them to look for jobs where some well-established organizational policies protect employees' jobs and encourage retention. Also, a lack of adequate development strategies, motivation, and promotion opportunities, encourage employees to leave the organization. Thus, job satisfaction affects employee retention.

Recruitment strategies may provide insights into possible retention potential. Sutanto and Kurniawan (2018) examined the impact of recruitment, employee retention, and labor relations on employee performance within the Batik industry in Solo City, in

Indonesia. The focus of the exploration was employee retention and profitability.

Retention of employees positively influences organizational profitability (Sutanto & Kurniawan, 2018). A good recruitment program positively influences employee commitment, productivity, work quality, higher employee retention, and profitability.

Employee retention requires strategic measures to encourage employees to extend their commitment to a business, which encourages organizational stability. Retention is achievable through rewards, incentives, bonuses, and other employee benefits. Bindu (2017) suggested that employee retention and commitment had become an important strategy adopted by many organizations to increase work performance. For instance, employee job satisfaction and motivation are essential tools to enhance employee retention. When an employee is satisfied with a tangible, such as pay, this may result in increased productivity and profitability; thus, increasing the potential for organizational goal achievement.

Employee Turnover

Business owners have many strategies they can apply to enhance employee retention. Voluntary employee turnover results from business owners' or organizational leaders' inability to ensure employee retention, such as employee pay satisfaction, motivation, and a spirit of creativity and innovation within the organization. Some business owners embrace low ethical leadership frameworks creating difficulties in motivating and retaining employees, resulting in high employee turnover (Nica, 2016). Some employees may leave their job because due to dissatisfaction. Thus, any organization that wants to retain their most talented employees should consider pay

satisfaction as the essential tool to improve job performance and productivity. Nica further highlighted that organizational leaders should apply effective leadership strategies to improve the wellbeing of their employees, to reduce employee turnover. Employees' commitment is paramount to the survival of a business, and any organization that lacks knowledge and strategy regarding how to invest in employees, may fail or experience reduced profits (Azeez, Jayeoba, & Adeoye, 2016). In addition, organizational commitment to employees may reduce employee turnover.

Employee commitment or satisfaction is crucial for efficiency, profitability, and growth of an organization. Conversely, employee dissatisfaction may result in employee turnover. Organizational commitment, such as motivation, incentives, and job satisfaction help reduce turnover. Azeez et al. (2016) underscored the point that employee job satisfaction leads to higher organizational commitment, and commitment leads to low employee intention to leave (turnover), and generally, commitment leads to organization growth, and increased business profits. Employee turnover is by employees, who are not satisfied in their current jobs because of lack of organizational commitment toward the employee (Devi & Krishna, 2016). An organization might consider compensating their employee through different reward programs, such as bonuses, training and development, and job satisfaction, and so forth. Devi and Krishna argued that many organizations face more significant challenges on how to reduce employee turnover. Also, they indicated that human resource (HR) management practices have a considerable influence to minimize employee turnover. Further, the relationship between HR practices and

employee turnover in the organization is evident, and consequently, ineffective HR practices could lead to increased employee turnover.

Job Satisfaction

Onyebu and Omotayo (2016) found that employee job satisfaction has a positive effect on organizational performance and profitability. Thus, motivational factors also play a significant role in employee job satisfaction, which ultimately has a direct influence on retention amongst employees in many organizations. Findings revealed that employee attitude, behavior, drive and job satisfaction directly impact organizational profitability. The authors argued that motivational system is critical to organizational success, and therefore; organizations must apply incentives and bonus programs to increase employee's job satisfaction. Conversely, Sawitri, Suswati, and Khasbulloh (2016) defined job satisfaction as the relationship between individuals and their work environment. Job satisfaction would arise if employees like their job and the workplace. Job satisfaction can affect employee's job performance either positively or negatively. Additionally, Kiarie, Maru, and Cheruiyot (2017) highlighted that employee job satisfaction is the basis of sustainable organizational performance; and thus, increase business productivity. Also, organizational leadership should influence employee job satisfaction, and job satisfaction affects organizational success and profitability. Kiarie et al. found that employee job satisfaction is a way to attract and retain the best-talented employees in the organization. Finally, employee job satisfaction is essential to a firm eventually fostering business development.

Job Performance

The end goal of business owners is to improve business performance and profitability through enhanced employee productivity. Well-designed job descriptions enhance employee motivation and thus improve organization profitability (Siengthai & Pila-Ngarm, 2016). Employee motivation, job satisfaction, and job design are effective ways to increase the performance of an employee (Siengthai & Pila-Ngarm, 2016). Basri, Rashid, Abashah, and Samah (2017) suggested that organizational leaders can motivate their employees, which will affect job performance and organization profitability. Furthermore, employee job performance depends on the management commitment toward the employees (Nica, 2016). Organizations with satisfied employees demonstrate high organizational performance and profitability. Also, pay satisfaction is a key component to increase employee job performance, profitability, and organizational growth.

Training and Development

Providing employees with the skills to complete tasks successfully, or advance their careers, are tremendous motivators for some employees. Innovation (digitalization) plays a crucial role in business success, and many companies are considering training and development as an effective strategy to increase employee performance (Budiningsih, Dinarjo, & Ashari, 2017). Training increases employee quality of work; thus, each employee requires frequent training to achieve the organization's goals and objectives (Budiningsih et al. 2017). Subsequently, for companies to succeed, organizational leaders must conduct training for their employees regularly and diligently (Budiningsih et al.,

2017). Benefits of training are to increase knowledge, skills, and experience. Training employees is motivating and a benefit (reward) given by the organization to employees (Budiningsih et al. 2017). Training has a positive influence and is still significant in increasing the attainment of employee performance (Budiningsih et al., 2017). Susomrith and Coetzer (2015) found that small business owners are considerably less likely to provide their employees with access to formal training and development (T&D). Also, the low level of engagement of employees are viewed as problematic, which might affect progress towards competitive advantage in small business (Susomrith & Coetzer, 2015). The lack of adequate training and career development on employees may hinder innovation in small business, and many independent small company owners do not possess the funds or expertise to develop their staff to benefit from available and required innovative technologies.

Employee credentialing is a potential financial gain for business owners. Chaubey, Kapoor, and Negi (2017) established that training had become a vital route to prepare the employees for the future market to gain competitive advantage; hence, knowledge and skill development have become an essential component of small business success and profitability. To meet the competition in the current market trends, small business owners and management need to motivate and engage their workforce in training and development to acquire different skills (Chaubey et al., 2017). Employee training enhances employees' knowledge and skills, which lead to employee motivation and retention (Chaubey et al., 2017). Finally, employee training and development is a learning experience which has a dimension to make a positive change that could result in

the attainment of the company's vision and objective. Training and development might improve the ability of the employee to perform the job more efficiently. Further, small business owners should design a training program as a strategy to motivate and retain an employee that could influence business performance as well as increase profits. A drawback of providing training, without developing a loyal relationship with employees may lead the trained employee to advance their careers elsewhere, creating significant monetary loss of business owners. Therefore, a strategy to establish psychological contracts with employees that ensure job commitment for a period, to balance out paid training, helps to ensure the skillsets remained employed at least for a while, within the organization.

Motivating Employees of Small Business Owners

Small businesses are important in a global economy. Employees of small businesses play a crucial role in delivering innovative quality products and services, which results in customer satisfaction (Vlacsekova & Mura, 2017). Small business owners should use effective strategies to enhance employee motivation. Group motivation incentives can apply when collaboration is a requisite of performance and workplace harmony. Business owners might consider increasing employee involvement in decision making processes, and career advancement opportunities, rewards, or bonuses (Vlacsekova & Mura, 2017). Employees should gain encouragement to be creative and innovative, and should receive periodic positive and corrective feedback, as well as recognizing accomplishments such as a finished project, reaching sales goals, or providing excellent customer service. Also, Viacsekova and Mura concluded that small

businesses should apply Maslow and Herzberg's motivational factors, which implied that many numerous factors motivate employees, and business owners have the responsibility to implement an effective strategy for employee motivation. Thus, effective employee's motivation will lead to adequate job performance and customer satisfaction. Rozman, Treven, and Cancer (2017) suggested that small business owners should design jobs or create a good workplace environment to reduce employee stress and implement motivational strategies that would lead to employee satisfaction and improved profitability. Furthermore, small business owners operate in a competitive environment globally (Rozman et al., 2017). Thus, employee job satisfaction is of paramount importance for business performance and efficiency. Poor management practices in the diverse workplace can have a negative influence on employee job performance (Rozman et al., 2017). For instance, when employees experience stereotype or prejudices, this action reduces the level of employee morale and performance. For effective and successful business improvement, the authors suggested that business owners should adopt diversity in the workplace and motivate their employees to boost organizational performance. Kubica and Szarucki (2016) highlighted the importance of motivating employees as a critical factor for business success; which ideally involves the integrated model of motivational strategies for work performance. For example, financial and non-financial incentives are important motivators. Also, education, training, and career development are other factors that would improve employee motivation. Business owners or management should emphasize using effective strategies to promote and enhance employee motivation to increase business profitability and growth.

Motivation and Retention Strategies

The goal of every motivation and retention strategy is to keep the valuable employees of a firm from leaving and joining the competition. An excellent benefit package, such as employee stock purchase and pension, health insurance, and numerous other incentives and bonuses, are effective strategies organizational leaders should apply to motivate and retain their employees. Al Badawy, Fahmy, and Magdy (2017) discussed the importance of employer's brand as a positive influence on motivation and retention of employees, which attract talented applicants. Employer branding is a relatively new strategy toward recruiting and retaining talented employees, within an increasingly competitive environment (Al Badawy et al., 2017). Furthermore, apart from employer's branding, other factors such as organizational culture, which comprise of attitudes, experience, beliefs, values, and employee engagement, can enhance motivation, attendance, and employee retention (Motlou, Singh, & Karodia, 2016; and Al Badawy et al., 2017).

Culture serves as an essential control mechanism that guides the attitudes and behavior of employees (Motlou et al., 2016). Motlou et al. indicated that the reasons why employees stay or leave an organization for another company depends on how satisfied they are in their currently role, company, and industry. Investment in employee training and development is a crucial element in employee satisfaction, motivation, and retention.

Business Sustainability

Business sustainability is complicated in a competitive market compromised by economic downturns. Alharary (2017) underscored the need for short-term and long-term

goals for business sustainability through strategies, such as employee motivation, innovation, focused on the triple-bottom-line, economic (financial), social, and environmental challenges. Also, a sustainability strategy is a competitive necessity, and many firms applied to sustainability as a core element for the improvement of organizational profitability (Pizarro, 2016). Employee values and intrinsic motivation correlate positively with perceived behavioral control, which relates positively to the adoption of sustainable practices (Pizarro, 2016). For instance, sustainable practices might compete with an employees' motivation on certain tasks; thus, the latter is part of performance evaluations (Pizarro, 2016). Conversely, sustainable innovation is a major driver of organization's new change initiatives, and the success is attributable to employee's engagement and motivation (Delma & Pekovic, 2018). Furthermore, Delma and Pekovic underscored the vital importance of intrinsic motivation and flexibility as a contributing factor that facilitate innovation. The context of sustainable innovation to improve a company's profitability, employee work practices should be more conducive to firm innovation in corporate sustainability (Delma & Pekovic, 2018). For instance, the workplace environment or social interactions can promote employee job satisfaction and motivation, which, in turn, leads to increased productivity, creativity, and job performance.

Employees and Customer Service

A mutual understanding between employees and customers is seen as a determinant of customer relationship management. Lin and Lin (2017) indicated that the importance of a positive relationship between staff and customers help the organization

perform well. Further, organizational leaders and management should increase and influence of positive customer emotions and customer-staff rapport through active engagement. Open communication, training, and motivating employees to use nonverbal communication, helps to develop and strengthen employee and customer rapport (Lin & Lin, 2017). Piaralal, Bhatti, Piaralal, and Juhari (2016) argued that employee training, empowerment and motivation play a critical role in employee and customer relationship. Additionally, increases in education and experience in products and services have directly affected customer choice, expectations and buying behavior (Piaralal et al., 2016). Thus, the more experienced employees have in a product might lead to improved service delivery to customers and increase customer loyalty. Furthermore, Piaralal et al. argued that customer service orientations become a motivational strategy for leaders to support attitudes of employees in providing optimal service. Similarly, De Waal and Van (2016) suggested that one of the most important goals of every organizational leader is to serve customers satisfactorily. De Waal and Van highlighted that without continuous customer satisfaction, organizations likely will lose their competitive edge. As a result, leaders should implement effective strategies to train and motivate staff for improved customer service.

Leadership, Employee Communication and Motivation Strategies

Employees are one of the most important stakeholders and significant to organizations effectiveness and success. Management must map out effective approaches such as employee organizational relationship (EOR) strategies. The values of internal communications have improved and enhanced relationships with employee engagement

and motivation (Kang & Sung, 2017). Excellent employee communications could produce quality employee relationships and target employee behaviors to the organizational vision. For instance, employees who receive positive performance feedback, tend to exhibit motivation and maintain trusting relationships with the organization (Kang & Sung, 2017). Additionally, certain internal organizational practices, such as regular and transparent communications with employees, associate with good employee-corporate relationships. Similarly, the effectiveness of internal communication is a leading indicator of small or medium-sized organizational success.

Communication satisfaction is an essential element in a well-functioning business. When employees come from diverse cultures, understanding cultural diversity might pose challenges in developing a productive business relationship (Jalalkamali, Ali, Hyun, & Nikbin, 2016). Communication among staff and management play a crucial role in the performance of job satisfaction (Jalalkamali et al., 2016). Communication is one of the most critical approaches by management (Bucata & Rizescu, 2017). Being a corporate leader does not only mean to rein in business, but more importantly, to coordinate employees, leadership skills, and communicate more effectively help facilitate progress toward job performance (Bucata & Rizescu, 2017). Effective communication and motivation of employees may help the organization perform effectively in achieving beneficial results (Bucata & Rizescu, 2017). Also, to enhance team dynamics, managers should bridge gaps between team members of the organization through purposeful and active communication. Through better communication, organizational activities may generate success, which could also improve job satisfaction and performance. Therefore,

effective communication should facilitate the relationship between leaders and employees to establish a better workplace environment. Manager communication with the employees should be a top priority for managers in achieving company goals and objectives. Employee participation is crucial to engage in the organizational decision-making process, communication, and teamwork to impact on the job satisfaction (Avani & Gulzar, 2016). Employee participation and open communication are essential to provide the platform to share their ideas in a team setting, with collective experience and knowledge, which may motivate employees. Lee, Lee, and Sphn (2017) pointed out that organizational communication generally provides employees with accurate corporate information and opportunities to affect the organizational decision-making process. In these cases, organizational communication reduces the uncertainty related to the employee tasks. Effective communication can lead to positive employee-level outcomes.

Communication with managers and other workers enables employees to affect the organizational decision-making process, cooperate, and coordinate work projects positively and effectively. The way a leader communicates with employees affects their motivation toward the work commitment (Gutierrez-Wirsching, Mayfield, Mayfield, & Wang, 2015). Thus, communication is a vital component of good leadership.

Effective leaders know that only by opening to people and sharing valuable information that they can obtain input from employees. However, effective communication and motivation strategies improves employee performance (Gutierrez-Wirsching et al., 2015). Job satisfaction, inspirational leadership, employee motivation, and positive communication with employees, was beneficial to organizational success

(Justin, Kaitlynn, Bharat, & Jitendra, 2017). Additionally, the ability of a company's leaders to provide regular and helpful feedback and positive communication to employees, is the basis for effective management (Justin et al., 2017). A leader's feedback conveys in an impolite way to subordinates, might lower the morale of employees; and consequently, may result in employees in search of new jobs.

Communication, and motivation through reward and recognition, training and development are crucial elements in executing the company's strategy in reaching goals and objectives. Employees have been the primary driver and resource that benefits organizations through their contribution in decision-making strategy formulation, translating, and communicating the strategy into operational practices (Thanyawatpornkul, Siengthai, & Johri, 2016). For effective workflows and efficiency, leaders and managers must communicate the plans for simple concepts or ideas to employees, to relate the ideas to their various daily work activities. Leaders and managers must demonstrate the leadership philosophy, and act accordingly for the progress of the organizations. For example, during strategy execution, communication is a continuous process, achievable through regular meetings, posters, emails, newsletters, Intranet, broadcasting, and special events.

Effective two-way communication is critical in translating strategy into actions; from the corporate level to business units to frontline employees. Effective and efficient communication creates a vibrant and healthy environment in organizations. Well-informed communication might lead to new knowledge and ensure better understanding of leadership strategies and direction. However, a company must provide an environment

in which everyone is free to communicate openly, without fear as well as to support an organization's strategies in obtaining favorable outcomes. Additionally, transparent and effective communication rules are of importance to complete tasks.

Transition

Section 1 included a detailed literature review and the introduction to the research question: what strategies small business owners use to motivate and retain their sales associates to increase profits. The first component of Section 1 consisted of the background of the phenomena, the problem statement, and purpose statement, nature of the study, research and interview questions, conceptual framework, operation definitions, the significance of the study, concluding with the review of the professional and academic literature. Section 2 includes the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data analysis, reliability and validity, and transition and summary. Section 3 will consist of the research findings, the study's application to professional practice, implications for social change.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that small business owners used to motivate and retain sales associates to increase profits. The population for this multiple case study consisted of four small business owners located in Texas who have deployed successful strategies to motivate employees. The implications for positive social change may be improved employee retention, thus promoting greater business sustainability, spending power, and economic stability in the communities.

Role of the Researcher

My role in conducting research was to protect the integrity of the research process by ensuring participants were safe from harm due to potential misuse of information gathered, mistreatment during interviews, or neglect (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I worked to recognize participant needs throughout the entire process. As researcher, I was the primary instrument in the data collection, analysis, and storage processes. Another important task in research is to avoid bias by maintaining a neutral perspective. Approaching the interview process without preconceptions assists in reducing potential bias. To reduce potential bias, data collection involves multiple sources to ensure the topic exploration includes multiple perspectives to support a thorough and diverse information gathering process. Yin (2016) stated that the use of multiple sources of evidence improves the study's construct validity and reliability to ensure the information collected is accurate and trustworthy. Van and Struwig (2017) suggested that a qualitative researcher uses documents and semistructured interviews as instruments for data

collection. To further reduce bias, I had no relationship with participants, the organization, or the topic under investigation. A lack of knowledge of the participants' perspectives and experiences helped me to avoid preconceptions about situations that could have affected my interpretation of data.

In preparation for the research, I ensured that I proceed in accordance with the Belmont Report (1979). The Belmont Report (1979) guides ethical behavior of researchers. Adherence to the Belmont Report requires researchers to ensure the confidentiality of all participants and all information collected. The Belmont Report has three principles: (a) respect for the person, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice.

Conducting research requires the use of an interview protocol. The interview protocol provides the steps and instruments used in the data collection process (Yin, 2016). An interview protocol contains the interview questions, a script to follow to ensure each interview is consistently delivered, a copy of the informed consent form and a copy provided for the participant before the interview, information on confidentiality and safe storage of personal information, and a pre-arranged agreement to conduct member checking following the interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Participants

I commenced the data collection process following approval from Walden University's Institution Review Board (IRB). The participants for my qualitative case study were business leaders drawn from four small businesses located in Texas who have successfully applied strategies to motivate employees. Farooq and De Villiers (2017) suggested face to face interviews are ideal for qualitative inquiry to capture both spoken

and unspoken subtle nuances characteristic of the research experience. Yin (2016) suggested a minimum of three participants to ensure saturation in interviews. To access participants, I used a database of active small business owners from the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Texas State Small Business Association. The list contains the business owners' names, addresses, cities, counties, telephone numbers, and years of business establishment. Thus, through purposeful sampling, I limited my selection of participants to those who met the following criteria: (a) small business leader in Texas who use strategies to effectively motivate and retain employees, (b) willingness to participate in an interview process, and (c) indication that they are profitable because of employee retention.

To contact potential participants, I used the telephone and mail to describe the purpose of the research, the interview process, and the methods used to protect their confidentiality during the research process. The potential participants received an invitation letter and consent form, which they signed and return, agreeing to participate in the study. By agreeing to participate in the study, participants were aware of the purpose of the study and their rights to proceed or yield in answering any questions without penalty. Participants reserved the right to answer some, all, or none of the questions without consequence. Data collection involved three sources: (a) interviews, (b) documentation, and (c) physical artifacts. I distributed the consent form following Walden University IRB approval with the IRB approval number 05-07-19-0727556 to conduct research. After the approval of the consent form from the IRB, I emailed it to the participants with information (a) outlining the purpose of the study, (b) requesting the

availability of time to conduct a face-to-face meeting, (c) re-checking to ensure participants meet the established criteria to participate in the research, (d) notifying participants of the audio recording proceedings of the interview, and (e) reminding participants of the right to refrain from answering any or all questions without consequence. Marrone (2016) recommended that acquiring consent is the ethical and legal responsibility of the researcher to ensure every participant makes an informed decision to participate or not participate in the research. Establishing a working relationship with participants is paramount (Yin, 2016). The strategy I used to establish a working relationship with participants was to be available to answer questions and provide guidance, ensure transparency in activities, and protect the participants by securing all information in safe password protected location.

Research Method and Design

Researchers select an appropriate method and design which that aligns with the central research question (Marshall & Rossman. 2016). Researchers choose between a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach (Saunders et al, 2015). I assessed case study, phenomenological, and ethnographic designs. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the methods and designs and justify my use of a qualitative multiple case study to conduct my research.

Research Method

Researchers select between three methods: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. My intent was to study a phenomenon using interviews and available evidence through company websites and documentation. Qualitative researchers investigate a

problem through interviews, artifacts, and reports (Saunders et al., 2015). I used a qualitative method because this approach was suitable to address the central business question. Conversely, researchers using quantitative research examine variables' relationships and explain phenomena using hypotheses testing rather than participants' narrative experiences (McCusker & Gienayelin, 2015). I did not use the quantitative method for this study because I did not intend to examine the relationships or differences of variables, and my data included words, themes, and observations. Mixed-methods research was not suitable for my study because, according to Wong and Cooper (2016), mixed-methods comprise both quantitative and qualitative components to examine and explore relationships or differences among variable. The inclusion of quantitative data in the mixed methods rendered the mixed methods approach inappropriate for this study.

Research Design

The three designs I considered for my qualitative research were (a) case study, (b) phenomenology, and (c) ethnography. The case study, phenomenological, and ethnographic designs are appropriate for a qualitative research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Phenomenological researchers seek to contextualize individual participation and experience with research phenomena (Giorgi, 2015). The phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study because I did not limit the focus of this study to only lived experiences of participants. Ethnographic researchers investigate unique populations, cultures, and social groups, seeking to explain the phenomenon by unique factors related only to the group (Pluye, Hong, Bush, & Vedal, 2016). An ethnographic design was not appropriate because the selected population was

not culturally unique. A researcher conducts a case study as an empirical inquiry to investigate a case or cases and understand a phenomenon (Yaghmaei & Brem, 2015). Also, Yin (2016) stated that case study researchers access a situation previously inaccessible to empirical study. In summary, I selected the case study approach to investigate the central research question.

A multiple case study was more appropriate for this study than a single case study design because using a single case study would produce some insight, but at the same time might create biases that may result in a deficiency regarding reliability, dependability, validity, credibility, and confirmability. Yin (2016) argued that two or more examples of evidence are more representative than a single case study. Each organization may operate differently and may offer unique strategies to establish a competitive edge. A multiple case study may give researchers an opportunity and flexibility to gather various information from different participants about the strategies small business owners use to motivate and retain sales associates to increase profits. The multiple case study design allows researchers to collect data from various sources to gain access to the evidence and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2016). Using a case study design allowed me to use interviews, documentation, and physical artifacts to gain narrative explanations on decisions made by small business owners on strategies they use to motivate and retain their sales employees to increase profits.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of leaders of four small businesses located in Texas who have applied the various strategic approach in employee motivation and retention. A researcher must ensure that all participants satisfy specific eligibility criteria and possess the ability to answer the researcher question when applying purposive sampling (Galvin, 2015). I purposefully selected participants who were (a) small business owners, (b) had successfully motivated and retained employees, and (c) agreed to participate in this study. Sample size should allow the researcher the best opportunity to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness., 2015). Galvin (2015) stated that a critical element in upholding validity within research is for the researcher to achieve data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) indicated researchers reach saturation when the addition of new data provides no additional information. I did select participants that met the eligibility requirements to participate in this study. The researcher should select participants who know and experience the phenomenon, and who can provide general and detailed data (Apostolopoulos & Liargovas, 2016). Each participant had detailed knowledge about successful strategies to motivate and retain employees to increase profits.

Additionally, I used purposeful criterion sampling for this study because it aligned with my intent to conduct a qualitative multiple case study. A researcher's goal of using purposive sampling is to have participants yield the most critical, relevant, and plentiful data on the topic of the study (Yin, 2016). Marshall and Rossman (2015) found that purposeful participant selection has the potential to assist the researcher in addressing the research question. If the original candidate pool had drained and I did not reach

saturation, I would have applied snowball sampling to gain access to other potential participants who met the criteria to exhaust the interview process (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Ethical Research

Prior to conducting research, I received approval from the Walden University IRB, with the IRB approval number 05-07-19-0727556. Before commencing interviews with the participants, I distributed a consent form explaining the interview process and expectations. I informed participants of their rights to withdraw without penalty. Participants maintained the right to answer all, or some questions, and, no participants withdrew from the study. Any data collected at the time of withdrawal will be treated as requested by the participants. For example, if they would like all their contribution omitted from the study, I would have accommodated their wishes. My intent is to protect personal information through safe storage of all related information for a period no less than 5 years. To protect participants' identities, I applied a pseudonym [P1, P2]. The use of a pseudonym was to prevent public exposure of personal identifiers.

Participants reviewed the consent form, asked questions, signed and returned the form. All retrieved and signed consent forms will remain stored in a secure location for no less than 5 years. The researcher must protect participant privacy and integrity of the study.

Maintaining the ethical standards and rules guiding the research procedures is essential (Yin, 2016). The Belmont Report emphasized that researchers should respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). This study was confirmed by the IRB to ensure no harm comes to participants in

any part of the research process. I used a semistructured interview process with open-ended questions that allowed the participants to express their views in response to the interview questions (Appendix B). Van de Berg and Struwig (2017) suggested that a qualitative researcher use documents and semistructured interviews as tools for data collection. The participants did not receive compensation for participating in this study; however, each participant will receive a courtesy summary of findings of the research.

Data Collection Instruments

As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument in this study. Additional instruments included semistructured interviews questions, pencil and paper for recording nuances, a tape recorder, and interview protocol. The use of an interview protocol (Appendix A) guides the interview process ensuring all questions, and the process of asking questions, remains consistent to enhance the reliability of the research. I conducted semistructured interviews with owners of four small businesses in Texas State. Yoke-Mui, Ahmad, and Nabavi (2016) stated that semistructured interviews allow for a thorough investigation of the business problem. Khan (2016) argued that the qualitative semistructured interview technique is popular among qualitative researchers. Furthermore, open-ended probing questions help to obtain detailed responses from the interviewees (Ozer & Douglas, 2016). The data collection process involves a series of activities which include gaining permission, conducting sampling strategies, engaging in interviews, recording and sorting data, and resolving ethical issues that may arise (Yin, 2016). A researcher provides the data interpretations to the participants to member check each contribution to ensure information collected is accurate, and if not, the researcher

will alter the data to reflect the intentions of the participant; this process enhances the validity of the research process (Moreland & Apker, 2015).

Data Collection Technique

Morrison, Clement, Nestel, and Brown (2016) suggested that qualitative researchers frequently use primary data collection methods such as semistructured face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, questionnaires, and audio-recording. The advantage of using face-to-face interviews in a case study is that face-to-face interviewing is more direct and straightforward (Gadalla, Abosag, & Keeling, 2016). The researcher gains a valuable understanding of the problem and develops rapport, trust, and understanding between the researcher and interviewees.

Conversely, a disadvantage of the face-to-face interview is potential bias if the researcher inadvertently influences the results by infusing incorrect inferences (Yin, 2016). To avoid or reduce personal bias of the data collection, I used member checking to avoid misinterpretation of the interview transcripts. Member checking is a method to share a participant's interview data with the participant to establish the accuracy of the interview data (David, Hitchcock, Ragan, Brooks, & Starkey, 2016). Another disadvantage of using face-to-face interviews in data collection is that the environment or the place of the interview might be a source of distraction if not controlled well by the researcher (Gadalla, Abosag, & Keeling., 2016). I applied member checking techniques to mitigate bias and increase trustworthiness as well as follow the necessary steps as planned. Klenke (2016) highlighted that in qualitative research, interviews are the most popular method of collecting data. I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) was to

ensure each interview conforms to the requirements for a case study. The interview protocol helps increase the reliability of the research process. Researchers use in-depth interviews to collect data that are impossible to gather from common observation (Cairney & St. Denny, 2015; Kihn & Ihantola, 2015).

A researcher can use a telephone conference for interviewing the participant where face-to-face meetings are not possible. During the interview process, the interview with each participant took approximately about 30 minutes. Conversely, the benefit of semistructured interviews is the ability of the researcher to encourage the participants to provide more information when the need arises (Jug & Vilar, 2015). The use of an interview protocol, which is a step by step approach to guide the interview process, will ensure the researcher stays within parameters to ask questions and helps the researcher to treat each interview in the same manner (Yin, 2016). The interview protocol contains the interview questions directing the interviewer through the interview process (Chen & Mykletun, 2015). I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) to ensure consistency in the interview procedure. The use of a recording device was helpful in recording interviews and wearing a watch was to ensure the interviews stayed within the planned time limits. I used a pencil and paper approach to take notes during the interview proceeding as a suitable tool to capture any subtle nuances. My strategy for data collection was to transcribe the recorded data into a Microsoft Word and Excel spreadsheet. All collected data will remain confidentially locked in a cabinet, and a password protected computer to protect the integrity of the research.

I asked open-ended and probing questions to gain a comprehension perception of the business problem. As a result, I gained a deeper understanding of the phenomenon regarding the strategies small business owners use to motivate and retain employees to increase business profits. I encouraged participants to honestly and openly respond to the interview questions. With the participant's permission, I used audio-recorder to record the interview sessions and supplement with other company archival documents, such as sales reports. Qualitative researchers use member checking to enhance the validity by presenting each interviewee with their own interview data to clarify any misinterpretations in the data and make corrections. I provided each participant with a copy of their contribution to the interview. Each participant reviewed their content, make edits as need, and send the corrected data to me within one week, to complete the member checking process.

Data Organization Technique

I used a note book to write down date, time, and other vital information about the interview. The process of reflective journaling is vital to the data organization process and contains field data related to the information collected. Researchers must organize, format, and arrange all interview data properly secured to maintain the confidentiality of every participant's information (Brennan & Bakken, 2015; Yin, 2016). I will store all the information I gather from the participants, documentation, and physical artifacts in a safe place at least for the minimum of 5 years before destroying them. To ensure confidentiality and information privacy of research participants, researchers must store research materials in a secure place (Goffnett, Lepisto, & Hayes, 2016). Each research

participant was assigned a unique pseudonym and labeling format for distinguishing each participants' contribution and protecting the integrity of the interview process. I labeled any electronic files of the interview data with the participant's pseudonym, for example, P1, P2. Marshall and Rossman (2016) recommended labeling and categorizing data for consistency to protect the participants' confidentiality. I will store electronic files in a password protected database within my home and destroy after 5 years. Labeling the electronic files to correspond to each participant's identifier will speed up the transcription reports process. I scanned all the written interview notes and label them with participant's identifier, the interview data, and type of document.

Data Analysis

Gill et al. (2016) argued data analysis is a process for making sense of data. The use of methodological triangulation ensures the study includes an exploration using multiple lenses, such as interview data, documentation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2016). Prior to analyzing the collected data, I organized the information from the various sources, interviews, documentation, and artifacts. I also reviewed the related literature that supports and refutes research concepts, which draw on the conceptual framework as a means of grounding the study within a research context.

I engaged in the data analysis process by coding the collected data, highlighting key ideas and terms, keeping a count of the frequency of terms in the data. I opted to use pencil and paper analysis as opposed to software as both approaches provide the same outcomes, but I was more interested in the process of coding and clustering as a 'hands on' process, as opposed to a software tabulation of frequencies. Data analysis involves

two distinct processes, data reduction and data interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The purpose of data analysis is to make meaning out of raw data. I manually transcribe the collected data, organize the data through coding and clustering, to facilitate the process of developing themes from the patterns evolving in the data. The process of thematic analysis involves capturing repeated ideas and terms. The process eventually and ideally leads to a clear summary of the findings applicable to the goals and intentions of the research process.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability and validity are crucial to ensure the trustworthiness of an investigation. Reliability indicates the consistency of researcher's approach (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers must pursue trustworthiness and dependability by truthfully specifying the data gathering and data analysis processes and results (Webster, Brown, Mathew-Maich, & Atterso, 2016). I used an interview protocol because a researcher can use the interview protocol as a guide for the interview to mitigate misunderstandings and prejudices, and to ensure the researcher reliably employed the same data collecting procedure and analysis. The qualitative focus is upon the credibility of evidence collected and conclusion reached (Parker & Northcott, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative study ensures that audiences can rely on the research discoveries and can follow the specific research techniques the researchers used in carrying out the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To establish dependability in a

case study, researchers apply consistent interview and analysis strategies. A part of this process is using an interview protocol to ensure alignment with the central research question and applying a consistent approach to analysis through appropriate coding, clustering, and theme development, consistent with a case study approach. The application of triangulation of multiple sources of data can enhance the reliability of the study and enable the researcher to explore a business problem through multiple lenses. The researcher can also establish dependability by utilizing a triangulation technique, such as the review of existing company documentation or website information (Fusch & Ness, 2018). Dependability develops through a process of conducting interviews in a repetitive manner, gaining a breadth of responses, and identifying both common and less common responses to explain business strategies. Dependability develops through consistency, diligence, and confirmation that all information collected is accurate. Member checking with each participant helped to ensure data was accurate and interpreted as the participant intended.

Validity

Akamatsu, Kawasaki, and Kojima (2016) indicated that validity in research ensures research findings are both credible and confirmable. Researchers use data saturation, member checking, and recorded data to validate research findings in qualitative research (Hussein, 2015). A researcher reaches data saturation when there is no additional information from data collection during the research and interview procedure, and at that point, the interview process stops (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The primary objective of qualitative research is to reduce researcher bias through research designs. A case study's validity involves having clear evidence of credible and confirmable information for data interpretation; and the confirmability evolves through methodological triangulation of various sources of data, example interviews, member checking, and companies achieved documents (Nelson, 2016). I used a combination of these validation techniques to demonstrate credibility.

Credibility

Credibility in research using an interview protocol, audit trail, member checking, saturation, and triangulation enhances trustworthiness (Gonzalez, Rowson, & Yoxall, 2015). Credibility depends more on the richness of information gathered, instead of volume of data collected (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Qualitative research findings are based on more than one method of data collection that enhance the study validity and credibility (Roulston, 2016). Researchers use member checking to allow participants to approve, correct or extend the researcher's interpretation of the experiences as recorded in the interview transcript (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Member checking is useful for the preliminary interpretation of interview data for accuracy. Data triangulation is another powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through verification from two or more sources. Triangulation is a method researcher uses in a case study to check and establish validity to arrive at consistency across data sources (Baillie, 2015). I conducted member checking and triangulation processes. Data sources for the study were semistructured interviews, company documents, and archival records. The use of more

than one procedure was to confirm that data analysis is credible and trustworthy (Kornbluh, 2015).

Confirmability

Confirmability connects to the participant's authentic reflections without the researcher's perspective interfering with the research outcomes (Hays, 2016).

Confirmation requires the comparison of data gathering from multiple sources through verification of data. Validating the research study using multiple data sources will help in the assessment of the confirmability of the findings (Hussein, 2015). Researchers ensure confirmability by verifying findings to ensure that the results accurately reflect the participant's experience and understandings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). I used the interview protocol, data triangulation, data saturation, and member checking, which enhance confirmability.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I provided detailed procedures for data collection, organization, and analysis, including an exploration of the role of the researcher, a discussion on the participation criteria, and ethical requirements in conducting research. In Section 3, I will provide a comprehensive description of the research findings, implications, and subsequent recommendations surfacing from the findings.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small business owners in Texas use to motivate and retain their sales associates to increase business profits. The specific business problem of this study was that some small business owners lack strategies to motivate and retain their sales associates. The data collection instruments consisted of in-depth face-to-face interviews with member checking and semistructured interview techniques, review of business documents, and company websites. The participants in this study comprised four small business owners who have used different strategies to motivate and retain their employees to increase their business profits, and all the participants had more than 5 years of business experience. In addition, the interviews took place at the participants' offices, and I integrated the documentation and physical artifacts (websites). After compiling, disassembling, reassembling, and interpreting all data, three themes emerged: (a) provide financial incentives, (b) increase job satisfaction, and (c) enhance job training. After the member checking, I transcribed the data obtained from the participants into Microsoft Word documents to ensure the information from the participants was accurate. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, I assigned each interviewee a pseudonym (P1, P2, P3, and P4) as I indicated in Section 2 of this study.

All participants agreed that financial incentives, job satisfaction, and job training were directly responsible for retaining and motivating employees and subsequently improving organizational profitability. The participants agreed that when companies

performed well, business profits would emerge. For instance, an employee who received bonuses, salary increases, on-the-job-training, and other incentives usually performed better than an employee who did not receive incentives. Other highlights of this section include applications of professional practice and implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, personal reflections, and a conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question for this study was: What strategies do some small business owners use to motivate and retain sales associates to increase business profits? Through interviews with four small business owners who successfully motivated and retained talented employee, I identified three themes and presented them in the following pages. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each. The conceptual framework that I used was transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978). Burns' introduced inspirational motivation as a motivational factor that enhances subordinates' efforts to achieve an organizational goal; a leader who motivates and gives rewards to their followers improves employees' efforts to increase profits (Northouse, 2016). The conceptual framework aligns with existing literature and themes generated in the findings because each theme suggested a transformational strategy a small business owner can use to motivate and retain their sales associate to increase business profits. I also reviewed available information from the company websites and social media, and direct observation.

Table 1 below shows the demographic information about the four small business owner participants. All the four interviewees had a combined total of 58 years of experience as business leaders in the small business industry in Texas

Table 1

Demographic Information About the Small Business Owners

Characteristics	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
Business Owner: Code name	P1	P2	P3	P4
Age	49	60	35	46
Country of birth	Nigeria	Nigeria	USA	USA
Highest level of Education	Masters' Degree	Bachelors' Degree	Bachelors' Degree	Doctorate Degree
Length in current Organization	20	16	12	10
Years of experience as Small business owners	20	16	12	10

The findings showed the strategies small business owners use to motivate and retain sales associates to increase business profits. The answers to the interview questions that each interviewee provided were aligned with the conceptual framework, literature review findings, and triangulation, which helped me identify themes during data analysis.

Theme 1: Provide Financial Incentives

Motivation is the process that contributes to employees or individuals in the effort toward attaining a goal (Novianty & Evita, 2018). Business leaders use financial incentive programs in various forms of direct compensation beyond salary to increase employees' motivation toward achieving organizational goals and improve performance (Novianty & Evita, 2018). The participants in this study P1, P2, and P3 agreed that

employees' motivation through various financial incentives would contribute to employee's retention.

A fundamental employee need is to be paid well for hard work. The exchange between labor and adequate pay have long been the standard of reinforcement at work. Many employees will argue little else matters beyond good pay. Arguably, pay, with any additional incentives, works to motivate employee retention. Pay incentives, praise, bonuses, and any other form of recognition goes a long way to strengthen the psychological contract between an employer and employee. The organizational leaders in this study all agreed on the vital nature of adequate pay, underscoring that low pay is generally a good incentive to leave an organization. Employees who leave due to inadequate pay will likely gain meaningful employment with competition, strengthening a different business who will inevitably create challenges to all other businesses struggling to remain active in the competitive market. Treating employees well ensures fair access to the competitive market and leads to employee longevity, increased customer loyalty, and greater business sustainability. A satisfied employee, resulting from being appropriately paid, may prove to open lines of communication and secure an employee for a longer term of employment.

Nemeckova (2017) suggested that financial incentives, such as pay increases, pension schemes (401k), and other bonuses are significantly crucial to organizations for the improvement of employee motivation and retention in the workplace. Additionally, Nemeckova argued that when employees display a sense of happiness and satisfaction, it will increase their morale, work performance, and productivity level. Well-motivated

employees perform better, and the organization with such employee attributes has a higher efficiency in achieving the company's objectives and goals (Krstic, Obradovic, Terzic-Supic, Stanisavljevic, & Todorovic, 2019). Transformational leadership was the conceptual framework for this study. Researchers have defined leadership differently. Ming, Tee, and Hua (2018) stated that a leader is an individual who could influence his or her subordinates to achieve the goal and vision of the organization. A transformational leader can influence and enhance followers' morale, motivation, and job performance (Ming et al., 2018). A motivational strategy relates to the dynamic force to stimulate individual behavior, and some leaders bring a significant positive change in their followers and organizations through using inspirational and individualized motivation to achieve more exceptional results (Busse & Czekala, 2018).

All four participants explained that the use of transformational leadership style inspired and motivated employees to achieve various organizational objectives. Some business leaders and managers use incentives to inspire and influence-employees for optimal profitability, increased productivity, as well as employee retention (Ming et al., 2018). Northouse argued that business leaders may achieve organizational success using financial incentive programs with the employees. Table 2 contains the participants' statements about employee motivation and incentives programs.

Table 2

Theme 1: Provide Financial Incentives

Participant	Participant Comments
P1	We give bonuses and other incentives that can motivate employees' performance. Ultimately, this process also enhances the cordial relationship between employees and our customers. It is a strategy that helps build a relationship with our clients.
P2	As part of incentives, we train our employees, as well as inviting outside professionals to coach our staff on other effective methods of improving their job performance in our company. Sometimes, I take my staff out to meeting clients face-to-face in the field to demonstrating and establishing good customer service representation that could bring better workplace performance.
P3	In our organization, employees are compensated through various incentives programs, such as salary increases, bonuses, team trips, and outings where everyone comes together to have fun! At the same time, we use that opportunity to get to know one another on a personal level. Our company is like a family that have each other's back, and we see this approach as part of our company's culture that increases our company growth.
P4	Incentives program help in motivating staff. We have what we called "Happy Hours" where all the staff members come together for dinner and have some fun. Also, we have a big Christmas party every year; and this year 2019, I am taking my staff for our tenth anniversary out of town to have a good time together. I try to motivate my employees the way I want to be treated, and I do motivate them positively, which does enhance workplace performance in my company.

Theme 2: Increase Job Satisfaction

All four business leaders acknowledged employees' job satisfaction as a critical component that motivates people to perform effectively in the workplace. P4 stated that he doesn't have a survey to measure performance. However, they provide 6-month evaluations with both employers and employees' feedback. P4 also said he used internal feedback as a vital tool that helps build a good relationship between employers and employees. P3 indicated that the workplace environment influences employee productivity and job satisfaction.

In this study, all participants indicated that a key factor in the success of their organizations was the effort employers placed on drawing the best from employees through guidance, open communication, and reinforcement. Good communication reciprocated between organizational leaders and the various stakeholders in the company genuinely helped to create bonds characterized by mutual admiration, leading to a desire to perform well, to improve productivity, and care about outcomes within the company, ultimately, establishing a greater sense of job satisfaction. Employees demonstrated they had a stake in the success of the organization and, if rewarded, recognized, and understood by leadership, would act in a reasonable way and remain committed to the organization. A great amount of effort is required by employers to foster a healthy relationship with employees to develop a mutually respectful and trusting relationship, characterized by improved employee retention and a culture of unity within the company. A key element of job satisfaction results from careful attention and measuring of factors that contribute to job satisfaction, such as infrequent absenteeism, eagerness to complete

work tasks, frequent positive feedback, expedited resolves as issues arise, and an individualized approach to personal communication. All efforts on behalf of leadership to strengthen a mutual commitment to the company, enhanced by job satisfaction, will help to keep a company thriving within a competitive marketplace.

A well-designed workplace attracts people to the business. Wnuk (2017) found that employee job satisfaction offers small business owners and management staff the ability to structure the work environment, so the most valuable, loyal, and experienced employees are retained in the company for a more extended period. Wnuk argued that job satisfaction increases employees' effectiveness and decreases employee turnover intention. Huang and Chih-Hao (2016) ascertained that job satisfaction and other rewards should be a powerful tool in sharpening employees' attitudes toward workplace performance. Job satisfaction is a complex construct, and several types of relationship form job satisfaction. Low job satisfaction may be a negative factor in employee turnover (Huang & Chih-Hao, 2016). Valaei and Jiroudi (2016) agreed that job satisfaction has a positive influence on employees' high productivity and retention. Job satisfaction and performance are useful to employees' development, and business leaders and management should provide a plan that could enhance employee job satisfaction for the overall success of the organization (Valaei & Jiroudi, 2016)

Some business leaders use job satisfaction techniques to establish a better working atmosphere to increase employees' morale and job performance. All the four participants, P1, P2, P3, and P4 agreed that employee's job satisfaction helped improve business

growth and profitability. Table 3 includes direct statements from each participant related to employees' job satisfaction.

Table 3

Theme 2: Increase Job Satisfaction

Participant	Participant Comments
P1	I study employees' job satisfaction on an individual bases and use of questionnaires. On individual basis, I studied each employee on through their attendance to work. For instance, if they are happy, I believe they should be coming to work regularly to come and do their job. Likewise, when they are not coming on a regular basis, it means maybe something is wrong, either they are not satisfied with the job, or they are going through some emotional problem. On the other hand, sometimes, I gave out questionnaires to my staff to fill-out and to evaluate them. Through their response, I will know which areas to improve and assist them.
P2	Sometimes, the way my employees come to work; for example, showing up early to work, and immediately starting to book up some appointments with clients to show that they are happy and satisfied in their job assignment. Also, I train my staff to improve performance. With the flexibility and independence of my staff, they feel satisfied to work in my company.
P3	Well, one example of employee job satisfaction is job security, good pay, and a good environment. A place you are doing your business matters a lot. For example, this office we are sitting in now, we just moved in here not long ago; it is a very conducive environment for the staff and our clients. Since we moved in here, employees are happy and satisfied, and we are making progress in our business. Also, we compensated our staff with salary increases, bonuses, and team trips, which make them happy working in our company as well as retaining them.
P4	We do six months evaluations on our staff. Though, we do not do a survey or questionnaire, something we should be doing. However, we do ask our staff for some directives or opinions about our progress, and we expect feedback from them. We see internal feedback as a vital tool that helps us build a good relationship between the employers and employees. A lot of employees feel a sense of belonging and satisfaction when they have a good relationship with the employers. Also, we train our staff and increase their salary to motivate them. Through

motivation, it helps to increase employees work performance.

Theme 3: Enhance Job Training

Job training gives employers and employees advantages for successful engagement of business operations. All four participants in this study stated that job training is good for business improvement. Lin and Hsu (2017) found that on-the-job training and expanding the employees' learning experience should be encouraged by the business leaders to promote a healthy workplace environment. On-the-job-training could enhance personal knowledge of employees as well as improve the profitability of the organization (Lin & Hsu, 2017). Lin and Hsu argued that on-the-job-training could enhance the organizational commitment of employees and reduce employees' turnover intention. Also, motivating and retaining employees could increase the economic growth of the organization. Equally, on-the-job-training could also reduce accidents on the job and promote workplace safety and harmony, to increase job satisfaction.

A business leader who applies appreciative inquiry to identify the needs of each employee, particularly as it relates to training, with the intent of preparing the employee to grow in the company, is a tremendous incentive to remain with the company. The organizations involved in the study offered a range of incentivized training options for employees, including trade preparation, and other educational programs such as degree offerings in exchange for a commitment to stay with the company. These incentives work well to help prepare the employee for the current workforce, while providing the employee with competitive skills that aid in career building within the company and beyond. A key element in offering job training, is to help secure a commitment from

employees to support their academic and training growth, while contributing to the credentials within the company, essentially benefiting both parties to advance their interests. Ideally, both parties recognize this and work collaboratively toward their joint interests.

Participant P1 indicated that the use of modern technology, such as the internet, email, conference calls, and webinars helps improve employee's job training more effectively. Participant P2 added that he trains his employees as well as invites outside professionals to educate and coach his staff on the new market techniques. Park, Hye-Seung, and Eun-Jee (2018) suggested that business leaders and managers should support and promote employee motivation and on-the-job training to enhance employee knowledge, gain more confidence, skills, and experience necessary to work more competently. Organizational leaders expect that any knowledge and skills acquired through job training will transfer to the workplace, resulting in increased and improved job performance. Park et al confirmed that job training has positive outcomes for organizational productivity. Thus, with increased employee engagement in organizational development activities, the more this knowledge aids in employee productivity. Demiral (2017) pointed out that employees' training can significantly influence the success of an organization through different models, such as learning innovation, employees' motivation, and retention. Demiral listed some of the advantages of employees' job training as (a) improved productivity, (b) increased job satisfaction and career advancement, and (c) increased motivation. Another benefit of job training, as explained by Demiral is that small businesses or larger organizations investing in employees'

training programs can gain a competitive edge compared to their counterparts with no training services. Consequently, this competitive advantage is achievable by transforming the organization into a learning organization and environment, by teaching and training the workforce for long-term sustainable competitiveness, as well as increasing employees' skills.

Demirel (2017) and Ocen Francis and Angundaru (2017) stressed that job training raises the potential for increased profitability. The authors further argued that due to the rapidly changing business model and the current expansion of the global economy, technologies enhance organizational training initiatives of employees consistently. P1 said that in his business, he teaches his staff about the e-commerce business, and they use modern technologies in their business operations. P2 echoed the advantages of job training and stated that he teaches his staff on the new scope of their business model, as well as invites other professional to coach his employees on the latest market techniques. P3 stated that as a business leader, you must train and retain your staff because they are the active representatives of your company, which could lead to keeping them for an extended period. P4 highlighted that employees' job training is an excellent technique to improve business productivity. Regardless of cost and resource use, job training remains beneficial to business performance. Table 4 consists of a summary of the statements made by each participant on enhance job training.

Table 4

Theme 3: Enhance Job Training

Participant	Participant Comments
P1	Use of innovative technology is important in today's business. As an entrepreneur (business owner), I teach my employees about e-commerce business. Use of technology has helped us to create a flexible work environment and increase workplace performance. For example, software services, Skype video and conference calling, internet, email, webinars, are important tools that have helped us in our business operations.
P2	As, the business owner, I do train my employees, as well as inviting and outsourcing professionals who come and help teach and coach our staff on a better strategy and new market techniques to improving our services on the day-to-day operations of our business.
P3	We train and retain our staff properly because they are the representatives of our company. Also, training them will help to retain them for a longer period. We train our employees for optimal performance in all areas of our business operations.
P4	The, biggest issues, first, retention cost so much money to train employees. Though, recently, we trained one staff into a new position with salary increased. We try to advance within our company when possible, that is giving promotion to those who merit it.

Application to Professional Practice

The result of this study could assist current and future small business owners executing strategies to motivate and retain their sales associates to increase business profits. The results exposed three themes: (a) provide financial incentives, (b) increase job satisfaction, and (c) enhance job training. One tenet of Burns (1978) transformational leadership theory was inspirational motivation, which implied that leaders communicate a commitment to shared vision of the organization (Northouse, 2016). Some small businesses have closed due to leadership failures; and business leaders should apply strategies that can inspire, motivate, and enhance followers' self-interest, to achieve the organizations' vision and objectives (Ugwu, Enwereuzo, & Orji, 2016).

The specific business problem of this study implied that some small business owners lack strategies to motivate and retain their sales associates to increase business profits. Business leaders must commit to their subordinates' needs, empowering, engaging, encouraging, and rewarding them to achieve beyond what is expected (Uguru et al., 2016). In general, a leader is an individual who has ability or can influence, motivate and contribute to the effectiveness of the group or organization, to improve performance (Marcoux, Guihur, & Koffi, 2016).

Leaders who display transformational leadership traits; are effective at changing employee behavior to achieve organizational goals (Kim & Shin, 2017). Kim and Shin further argued that transformational leaders motivate employees through incentive benefits. As noted in the findings motivating employees through incentive programs would improve workplace performance, increase profits, increase employees' retention,

and decrease turnover. Inspirational motivation denotes a leader's ability to inspire and mentor followers (Louw, Muriithi, & Radloff, 2017), achieved through communication skills, mentoring, corrective action, and risk-taking. Small business owners should emulate and focus on efficiency and making sure their strategies are implemented in different management levels (Louw et al., 2017).

By following the recommendations of this study, small business owners could improve their business operations by implementing effective strategies that would increase business profits and long-term sustainability. Additionally, the application of the findings of this study may also reduce ineffective management of employees that lead to business failures. The findings can serve as a practical guide to some failing small business leaders that lack strategies to motivate their employees. Also, current and future small business owners could use employees' motivation strategies to improve business sustainability and profitability.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study could help improve the small business leader's strategy on employee's motivation and retention for optimal business profitability. Positive business leadership performance could lead to business growth, strengthening employment rates, promoting business development, fueling local and state economies, and enhancing employment opportunities for local citizens. The local and state economies can continue to move forward, especially when community members have a job and steady income, and assist the family financially, contribute to taxes to increase local and state revenues, and stabilize economic growth. The findings from this study could contribute to social

change by helping other small business owners implement motivation and retention strategies that increase business profits. Business sustainability supports both local and state economy; and fosters an optimum distribution of resources in the community (Marina & Wahjono, 2017). Appropriately allocated community resources may strengthen small business leader commitment to fuel local economics, generating local economic growth, while improving the quality of life for families, communities, and societies (Marina & Wahjono, 2017).

Recommendation for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that small business owners use to motivate and retain sales associates to increase business profits. Based on the findings of this study, I recommend several actions that current and future small business owners can utilize to increase employees' motivation and retention strategies. I identified three recommendations that could benefit current, and prospective small business owners' success: (a) provide financial incentives, (b) increase job satisfaction, and (c) enhance job training.

The first recommendation is providing financial incentives to employees and is essential to promote employees' motivation for business growth, and retention of employees. Business leaders should take the advantages and benefits of employees' motivation through incentives programs to improve business performance. Sudiardhita, Mukhtar, Hartono, Herlita, Sariwulan, and Nikensari (2018) stated that an organization should maintain its workforce by utilizing available resources at their disposal to effectively and efficiently achieve the organizational vision. Leaders who apply

motivational philosophy and practice can improve productivity and quality of work (Sudiandhita et al., 2018). Motivated and satisfied employees are an asset to the company and can impact the organizations' productivity and performance (Bhuyan & Gobwami, 2017). Job satisfaction is found to be positively and significantly related to employee performance; and small businesses and larger organizations should try to enhance employee job satisfaction.

The second recommendation is to increase job satisfaction and business owners can use this study to implement a strategy that will promote employee's job satisfaction, such as pay increases, and other reward programs. Job satisfaction is achievable if there is a positive rewards system established by the leaders and management (Hafeez, 2019), and satisfied employees give their full effort to achieve the goal of the company. Business leaders need to develop and improve employee retention to avoid employees' turnover intention. And lack of leadership, poor management and communication, and low pay can cause an employee to leave their jobs at any time if dissatisfied. Likewise, employee engagement and communication are crucial between employers and employees to enhance business success (Dask & Muthyala, 2016). Therefore, business leaders and managers need to improve employees' commitment and communication for sustainable business growth.

The third recommendation is enhancing job training. The current job market requires educated and experienced, skilled, and innovative professionals. Business owners need to establish a policy and strategy that would promote periodic job training to meet the present job market for talented employees. The job market requires educated

and experienced professionals with skills in innovation. Conversely, business leaders should invest in increasing innovation training among their workers to have a competitive edge. Alvarez and Carrasco (2016) emphasized that training employees on the newly acquired office machines and other modern equipment can speed up business operations.

On-the-job-training can boost productivity, and leaders who adopted and embraced change will overcome challenges and remain competitive. I intend to publish the study and share findings with other business owners in small businesses, colleges and universities, and business settings where business leaders discuss strategies related to employee motivation and retention. I will publish this study in peer review journals, where students and future researchers will have access to my research through the ProQuest/UMI Dissertations and Theses Database. Also, I intend to deliver a final copy of my study to each participant.

Recommendations for Further Research

I conducted a qualitative multiple case study on the strategies that small business owners use to motivate and retain their sales associates to increase business profits. The strategies found are (a) provide financial incentives (b) increase job satisfaction, and (c) enhance job training. The population of this study consisted of four cases in Texas State of the United States. Future researchers might use a mixed method and involve interviews with a much larger population. The quantitative research method can also be useful to test hypotheses and the correlation between the given themes and motivation strategies recognized in this study. Quantitative research can also be used to yield more extensive data analysis and to compare the external validity to different environments. Further

investigation into the impact of incentives as motivator for retaining employees, specifically, what incentives are most effective would shed light on ways to build relationships with employees through appreciation for work well done. Identifying key ways to increase employee job satisfaction at various work environments may help a broader population of businesses to establish a culture of harmony between employers and employees. While strategizing appropriate job training opportunities for employees in which the skill sets grow and support the company are essential, particularly while paired with enhancing job satisfaction and fortifying incentives to keep employees.

Reflections

In this study, I explored the strategies that small business owners implement to motivate and retain sales associates to increase business profits. I had an excellent opportunity to learn and conduct research to solve the business problem. Also, I gained insight from the experienced business owners that increased my knowledge and skills of what it takes to have a successful business. All four participants were polite, educated, and accommodating during the whole interview proceeding. I enjoyed a friendly conversation with all ~~the~~ four interviewees. I also learned so much from them on different methods of succeeding in small business operations. Experiencing the research process helped me understand that getting participants to agree to participate in this research was a bit challenging. However, for the participants who consented to participate, developing a good relationship was crucial because of the transcript review and member checking processes. I spent considerable time explaining to the participants their rights and the confidentiality of their identities to make them comfortable and establish trust. I used the

interview protocol to ensure that I asked the same questions of each participant, but the follow-up questions differed depending on the initial answer. The transcription of the interviews required a significant amount of time.

During this research, I had to move from New York City to relocate to Dallas, Texas, for a better opportunity. During that period, it was a very hectic and challenging situation for my family, including my study. While, in Dallas, gaining a stable job was challenging, and very difficult to maintain a reasonable living standard as well as coping with my study. Indeed, I was in a state of a dilemma! But with determination and prayers, I was able to see the end of the tunnel by completing my Doctorate program.

Meanwhile, based on the experience I gained from the business leaders, I am motivated to open my own business in the future, as well as establish a teaching career. I will use the knowledge, experience, and skills that I acquired from this journey to motivate my future employees and students.

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to explore the strategies small business owners use to motivate and retain sales associates to increase business profits. I collected data using face-to-face, semistructured interviews of four successful and experienced business owners who use motivational strategies to increase business profitability. Employees' motivation has a positive and significant impact on employee performance in the small business sector and larger organizations. The usual assumption is that the primary motivation is salary and other incentives, such as monetary rewards, bonuses, and many more. Motivation is a set of factors that stimulate and directly guide people to increase

their efforts to achieve a set goal. Business leaders' inability to motivate and retain their employees can lead to low profitability, and sustainability from failure to retain employee, which can result in employee turnover. Sustaining and growing a small business requires a leader who has the capacity and managerial experience to build a successful business that can improve performance and profitability. Business leaders must integrate the value and importance of sustainability into their strategic leadership decision-making. Thus, employee motivation and retention are vital for the next generation of businesses.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Introduce the interview, research topic in their respective offices and explain the purpose and scope of the study. Reassure the participants that I will keep all the collected information confidential, ask that I record the interview, and inform the participant of the right to stop the interview.

The questions for the interview are as follows:

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your age?
2. Where were you born?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. How long in the current organization?
5. How many years of experience as a business leader?

Strategic Research Questions

1. How does employee retention contribute to business performance?
2. What individualized considerations do you provide to employees to motivate them?
3. How do individualized considerations lead to retention and improved business performance?
4. How do you evaluate workplace satisfaction?
5. What exit interview initiatives, if any, do you engage in?
6. What information do you gain from exit interviews?

7. How do you address any personnel issues to improve retention?
8. How does retention increase profits?
9. What additional information can you provide to assist me in understanding how you improve business performance through retaining employees?

Follow-up and Member Checking Interview

Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage over coffee.

Share a copy of the succinct synthesis for each question and interpretation.

Ask a probing question related to any information that I found during the interview and related to the research topic.

After reviewing each question, I ask: Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?

Wrap up the follow-up interview by thanking the participant.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

The question for the interview is as follows:

Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?
2. Where were you born?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. How long have you been in your current position?
5. How many total years of managerial experience do you have?

Strategic Research Questions

1. How does employee retention contribute to business performance?
2. What individualized considerations do you provide to employees to motivate them
3. How do individualized considerations lead to retention and improved business performance?
4. How do you evaluate workplace satisfaction?
5. What exit interview initiatives, if any, do you engage in?
6. What information do you gain from exit interviews?
7. How do you address any personnel issues to improve retention?
8. How does retention increase profits?
9. What additional information can you provide to assist me in understanding how you improve business performance through retaining employees?